

FRENCH HILL
2ND DISTRICT, ARKANSAS

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS AND
GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420-0001

Dear Secretary McDonald:

I am writing to congratulate the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for being the first recipient of the newly reestablished Golden Fleece Award! Last month, I reestablished the Golden Fleece Award, first implemented by Senator William Proxmire, to highlight the excessive, unnecessary, and costly government projects and regulations that are wasting hardworking taxpayer dollars, and hindering the growth our economy.

Today's Golden Fleece is awarded to the VA for the mishandling of the \$8 million solar panel project at the Little Rock Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). The VA has been plagued with costly construction projects over the years, and in February 2012, the VA received and designated an \$8 million grant to build a 1.8 megawatt solar photovoltaic (PV) system in the parking lot of the Little Rock VAMC.

This construction project was completed in 2013; however, the PV system has never been activated, additional engineering changes are needed to ensure compatibility with the local electricity grid, and construction of a new parking garage has resulted in the tearing down and proposed relocation of a number of the solar panels for the PV system. It has been two years since the planned activation of the PV system, and many questions remain unanswered about the project.

I have also found from the VA's own website a list of 40 construction projects that are designated "Work in Progress" by the VA under its Key Renewable Energy Projects. Some of these date back to 2010 for the award date, yet still have not been completed or made operational, and some of these projects have cost taxpayers up to \$20 million. Further, the Little Rock project is also only projected to save around \$150,000 annually in energy costs, taking over 50 years to receive a full return on the \$8 million investment.

I am committed to eradicating this type of inefficient and ineffective spending and today's Golden Fleece highlights the mismanagement of these essential taxpayer dollars.

Sincerely,

French Hill
Member of Congress